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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002288

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: NEW SHIA ALLIANCE EXCLUDES MALIKI, BUT FINAL
MAKE-UP STILL TO BE NEGOTIATED

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[B](#). BAGHDAD 002105
[C](#). GMP20090824647002

Classified By: Political Counselor Yuri Kim for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: Iraq's main Shia parties, with the notable exception of PM Maliki's Da'wa, announced today the establishment of the Iraqi National Coalition (INC), a revitalized Shia grouping that seeks to run together during the national election scheduled for January. Saying the INC would build upon the "successes and errors" of the Unified Iraqi Coalition, former PM Ibrahim al-Jafari sought to brand the INC as a cross-sectarian group that remains open to additional members. The unveiling of a new UIC has been delayed multiple times because of disagreements about power-sharing and Maliki's insistence that he be the coalition's nominee for prime minister (ref A and B). Today's announcement is the first step toward solidifying the Shia's electoral alliances but is not necessarily final because Maliki is yet to definitively announce his electoral plans, and the INC members probably still must agree upon power-sharing among its many factions. End Summary.

INC = UIC - Maliki

[2](#). (C) After Jafari (National Reform Trend) stepped away from the podium, representatives of two of Iraq's primary Shia parties -- Karrar al-Khafaji (Sadrism Trend) and Vice President Adil Abd al-Mahdi (Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)) -- spoke about ending sectarianism and unifying Iraq's political forces (ref C). Da'wa Tanzim, a Maliki partner during this year's provincial election, also participated in today's INC announcement, effectively abandoning Maliki's Da'wa in favor of ISCI and the Sadrist. Other party leaders in attendance included Hadi al-Amiri (Badr Organization), Abd al-Karim al-Anzi (Da'wa Tanzim), Qasim Daoud (Solidarity Bloc), Hashim al-Hashimi (Fadilah), and Ahmed Chalabi (Iraqi National Conference). Despite its "nationalist" label, the INC contains no Kurdish membership and merely token Sunni Arab parties, like the often firebrand Shaykh Hamid al-Hayis from the Anbar Salvation Front. (Note: Hayis broke away from the more popular Sahwa al-Iraq to form his party. End note.)

[3](#). (C) Soon after the press conference, Hasan al-Sunayd (Da'wa Party) separately announced Da'wa had not made a final decision about the INC and claimed Maliki had not insisted that he become the alliance's nominee for prime minister. Sunayd said Da'wa did not join today's INC announcement because the new group does not include enough cross-sectarian and minority parties. Haitham al-Husseini, the chief of staff to ISCI Chairman Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, told Poloff after the press conference that the Shia are not seeking to leave Maliki behind but rather had delayed the announcement so Da'wa could "catch up." Hussein emphasized that ISCI will still work to encourage Da'wa to join.

14. (C) Maliki's chief of staff, Tariq Abdullah, told DCM Ford on August 19 that Maliki wishes to lead a cross-sectarian list against the INC but questioned whether Sunni parties would actually join Maliki. Sami al-Askari, a Maliki ally in parliament, told Poloffs on August 15 that Da'wa is disinclined to join the INC because its Shia rivals are not offering Da'wa enough seats and because, without significant Sunni or Kurdish membership, the INC resembles the Shia-only UIC and reinforces sectarian politics. Maliki has so far been unsuccessful in forging his desired cross-sectarian coalition and may face a tougher sell as political cohorts appear to have assessed that the August 19 bombing has appeared to have assessed that the August 19 bombing has damaged his credibility and popularity.

15. (C) COMMENT: All sides are likely to cautiously gauge public reaction to the new alliance, being sensitive to who receives the blame for causing a schism among the Shia or, conversely, for perpetuating Iraq's sectarian-based politics. Heightened threats from Sunni insurgents or concern the Shia might lose its dominance within the national government might push Da'wa back toward the INC. Our contacts say the influential Shia clerics in Najaf wish to avoid backing a particular alliance, but might advocate greater Shia cooperation to ensure the prime minister remains Shia.

16. (C) COMMENT CONT'D: Key to the INC's future is whether its members stay unified as they negotiate the tough issues of allocating parliamentary seats and leadership posts before the election. Its members include a former prime minister (Jafari), many who probably wish to become PM (Abd al-Mahdi, Daoud, Chalabi), and party leaders who likely have an inflated sense of their party's electoral popularity. To

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survive, the INC will have to reconcile the decades-old rivalry between the anti-American (but Iraqi nationalist) Sadrist Trend and the Iranian-origin (but often pro-U.S.) ISCI. END COMMENT.
FORD